



Edition # 2- July 14, 2009

Four weeks down, Six to go

With almost a month of the program under their belts, the Fellows already have much to talk about. From the Speaker Series with Dr. Andres Alonso and Anna Custer to meeting Rick Dempsey at the O's game, the past two weeks have been quite eventful.

In an exciting game that ended with a bottom of the ninth come-from-behind win by the Orioles over the Mets, even those fellows and law clerks not from the city found themselves cheering for the home team from the Mayor's box. During the game, Mayor Dixon stopped by, took pictures, and talked with the Fellows about their projects and potential impacts on the city. One of the greatest Orioles in history, Rick Dempsey, also popped in for a surprise visit to the box. Although the O's came out on top, the outcome of the game did not matter on this perfect summer night; all in attendance enjoyed the time spent together and the opportunity to better get to know one another.



In the last two Speaker Series, the Fellows have heard presentations from Dr. Andres Alonso, CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System, and Anna Custer, Executive Director of Live Baltimore. Dr. Alonso introduced himself by stating, "I'm Dr. Alonso and I'm trying to fix city schools." The present challenge of the school system is creating sustainability with a declining population. Alonso, who determines success by the graduation rate and the enrollment rate in the city, says the system has to do more with less, as enrollment has decreased from over 150,000 to less than 83,000 today. Also, the school system has downsized its employment, decreasing from 12,000 to 10,500.

Throughout this change, Dr. Alonso has received negative attention for closing 7 schools this year, with the biggest attention going to the closing of the Homeland Security High School mid-year. Dr. Alonso labels that as the most risky decision he has had to make in his position. Although 7 schools have closed, in his first year in Baltimore 6 new schools were created. He believes the key to improving the schools is to start from scratch. Although there is “so much work to be done,” he remains optimistic about the future of the system. He is a supporter of charter schools, and hopes to make city public schools more like charter schools to give the parents a choice for their children. A lesson he has learned that some Fellows have applied to their placements in city government is that “Sometimes, you must sacrifice the process in order to get the results you want.” In the current economic environment of the city, monetary resources are low; however, simply more money is not

the answer to a brighter future. It takes strong community support and a constant “zero-tolerance” policy in order to continue school improvements.



The next week, the Fellows came together in the Curran Conference Room to hear from Anna Custer of Live Baltimore. The organization serves as a “promoter” for Baltimore City life, working to attract new citizens to the city from other areas. “We look for the urban gene, that urban risk taker,” explains Custer, noting that her agency likes to focus on areas with a population already accustomed to some type of urban living. Areas like Prince Georges County, Montgomery County, and Washington, D.C. top that

list. Live Baltimore is headed by several talented individuals, who each oversee a specific division. For example, Steven Gondol is the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) manager. BRAC is expected to bring thousands of people to the Baltimore Metro Area. This is a great opportunity for Live Baltimore to take action to attract even more people to the city.

Custer makes sure potential residents are aware of the many advantages to living in Baltimore City. For example, the prices of homes in the city are very low, despite the higher property taxes. It remains less expensive to live in the city as opposed to the city’s surrounding areas. As a result, Baltimore has seen an increase of residents from areas such as Columbus, Ohio, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Currently, Live Baltimore is working to find a way to measure its impact on successful resident recruitment. The agency focuses on young families, but also finds ways to market to all demographics.

Experienced Fellow aims to Educate Baltimore's Schools



On the day of his interview, Warner McGee walked out of his door at 5 o'clock in the morning in order to be on time at City Hall. He drove from Atlanta, Georgia to Baltimore, Maryland to participate in the Fellows Program this summer. Warner, seeking his Doctorate of Public Health, lives out of the notion that "every moment is a teaching opportunity" and loves to educate individuals about health and its often overlooked impact on communities.

Warner's assignment for the Health Department is to make Baltimore City Public Schools more "Asthma Friendly."

Currently, there are 12 criteria that must be met to be designated an Asthma Friendly School. Twenty-five schools with the highest number of children diagnosed as having asthma in Baltimore City Public Schools were identified and are the focus of the project. Because there is no electronic record concerning the health of students in City Public Schools, health cards received from parents for each student for approximately 170 schools were counted by hand to determine which students have asthma. Warner is now meeting with principals regarding the needs of each school using the Asthma Friendly School Toolkit developed by the CDC and American Lung Association. Warner will identify areas needing improvement and will create annual plans for schools to move toward meeting all 12 criteria. The ultimate goal of the project is to reduce asthma-related absences from school, reduce asthma triggers in the school environment, and assist school health suites to identify children with asthma and effectively manage it in schools.

Warner wants to make sure "everyone thinks about health." He has an ambitious 5-point plan that includes opening a non-profit men's wellness center. Warner's goal is to "help black men lead healthy, productive lives." He also wants to become a professor of sexual health and one day direct a large state Health Department with a large minority population. By step "four and a half" Warner wants to have a nationally televised show on sexual health advice. Step 5 is to be the U.S. Surgeon General. Warner, who is unlike the vast majority of previous holders of this position, does not plan to become a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.). Warner believes that this difference is an advantage and that there should be more people in the position specialized in health and not solely medicine. Warner explained, "M.D.'s do not know health because they treat individuals; health is about populations."

A former Fellow for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the Division of STD Prevention, Warner worked on behavior intervention research. Also, he worked for Planned Parenthood of Georgia where he coordinated a young male's sexual education program. So far, the biggest lesson learned for Warner through the program is that the "process" must be sacrificed at times for progress; compliments of Dr. Andres Alonso.

In his spare time, Warner likes to read articles about health and keep updated on the technological advances in the field. He was excited about the opportunity to work in Baltimore. He stated that he admires that "The City is run by competent females."

UMD Graduate reaches out to minorities throughout Baltimore

While preparing to graduate with a degree in both Spanish and Government and Politics, Kelly Brown received an email about the Mayoral Fellows Program just two days before the application deadline.



She rushed to get the necessary requirements for the application ready and was relieved when the deadline was pushed back so she could strengthen her essays.

This summer, Kelly's project through Immigrant Affairs is to create a community outreach plan for Hispanic and Limited English Proficient (LEP) residents. A major part of her work is getting those residents to report themselves and their families to the Census Bureau.

For every person counted, Baltimore City will receive \$2,000 from the federal government. However, Kelly noted that Baltimore has the second worst census plan

for immigrants in the nation. Kelly is addressing the fact that immigrants need specialized marketing strategies, primarily to debug the misconceptions about reporting to the Census. Many believe it is not safe to report because of their illegal status in the country. However, the Census Bureau does not report to law enforcement authorities, and it is a completely safe process.

Kelly has found that if the information distributed is clear and thorough and it comes through credible sources like church members or pastors, people will trust the information and participate in the Census count. Another aspect of her project is to work with these immigrant groups to affect communities as a whole. For example, it is a well known fact that in many Baltimore communities the shops and stores are managed by immigrants. Kelly met with the Korean-American Grocers Organization to come to an agreement for their stores to use re-useable bags for the customers to save and bring back.

The biggest challenge of her project is to rally these groups in just 10 weeks. Most of the meetings that will discuss major changes will occur at the end of July, with approximately 3 weeks left in the program. Also, it is hard to measure the success of her project because she can not directly attach an increase or decrease in the Census count to her work. Despite these challenges, Kelly greatly enjoys working with immigrant groups to change the way city government markets its programs to them.

Through her project, she has realized that all her life she has worked in community outreach and mobilizing groups of people. One of the best experiences for Kelly is learning about Baltimore City beyond what she sees on the news or through baseball games. Before she goes back to school, Kelly wants to work in public policy and international development. Her goal is to have a career that has an impact on Latin countries and/or the Hispanic population in America.

MIT Student takes on the Red Line Project



Tamika Gauvin is new to Baltimore, having moved to the Sharp-Leadenhall neighborhood from Brooklyn, New York in 2006. Tamika is currently a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology working on her Masters in City Planning concentrating on City Design and Development.

Tamika learned of the BCMF by a recommendation from a former Mayoral Fellow, who now works for the Maryland Department of Transportation. He said it was a “great experience” and Tamika decided to apply. Though she applied because she was interested in housing and planning, she ended up working with the Department of Transportation, a placement Tamika feels has “actually been a great experience”, adding, “I’m happy how things have turned out.” In addition, she appreciates that her project will directly tie in

to housing entities within Baltimore.

For the duration of the BCMF, Tamika will be working on “a very exciting project” with Danyell Diggs, Red Line Coordinator. The Red Line is a proposed 14-mile rapid transit route which will use the light rail (the transport method they are proposing) to go from East Baltimore to West Baltimore, the first project of its kind in the city. Starting in west Baltimore County, the Red Line will go through populous areas such as Edmonson village, Downtown, Fells Point, and Canton. The project – currently at the end of the planning phase and poised to enter the design phase – is off to a good start.

Tamika’s work will help to achieve one of the many goals outlined in the Red Line Community Compact, an agreement among community, business and civic leaders on goals and strategies to maximize the benefits and minimize the impacts on the communities along the proposed Red Line corridor. Her primary task is to develop criteria for community liaisons, which she explains will serve to “mitigate the impact of construction to communities along the alignment by coordinating and disseminating information to residents, businesses, agencies and contractors, and by providing rapid response when issues occur.” To accomplish this task, Tamika has searched far and wide. She consulted transit agencies in other cities including Los Angeles, Seattle, Phoenix, and Portland. To add to this research, Tamika consulted internal agencies utilizing liaisons to see how local liaisons operate in Baltimore agencies.

Unique to the Red Line liaison effort is the wish to hire people directly from the communities along the alignment so that the liaisons have a better knowledge of the communities. The liaisons will have a tremendous responsibility to resolve problems on behalf of their communities. Consequently, Tamika stressed that there needs to be a comprehensive effort to hire, train and support liaisons so that the needs of communities along the Red Line route can be provided to their satisfaction.

Regarding the Speaker Series in which Anna Custer of Live Baltimore spoke to the fellows, Tamika sees a powerful connection to her project. One of the tasks of the Red Line initiative is figuring out how to reach young people (ages 25-40), much like Custer herself attempts to attract young people to

Baltimore. “Transportation is a very important consideration for this group when considering moving to a city.” Regarding future Speaker Series, Tamika is excited to meet the prominent speakers whom are typically less accessible in normal settings. The BCMF is a great opportunity to see how city government works “behind the scenes.”

Recreationally, Tamika loves to dance. She danced with a church in New York City, and is currently choreographing a dance for a church in her neighborhood. She also enjoys spending time with her husband and 2 year-old son.

Coming from the expansive city of New York, she finds that Baltimore is great because it still has the elements of a city, but is small enough to foster close-knit communities. Tamika also likes living near the beautiful Inner Harbor. After the BCMF, Tamika hopes to move forward with her interest in housing. Interestingly enough, working with the DOT this summer has sparked a new curiosity in Tamika and she plans to incorporate that experience with her housing interest. “I’m interested in a couple of areas related to the development of Baltimore and I would be happy if I had the opportunity to come back into city government after graduation.”

Baltimore Teacher Views the City from Two Perspectives



Michael Hartwell is no stranger to learning. Hailing from Upstate New York, Michael attended various schools before going on to receive a double major in English and Political Science from Binghamton University. Through the Teach America program, Hartwell received his masters in Teaching from Johns Hopkins University. While he isn’t completely sure what direction he wants to head in the future, Michael will probably do something with “elements of government, education and advocacy.”

Now a teacher in Baltimore City, Michael uses his expertise on a daily basis, teaching children who represent the future of Baltimore City. “If I could be a student and make money doing that, I would. I love learning.” Michael remarked.

He found the fellowship through a friend who attended the 2008 BCMF. As a teacher in the City, Michael is able to enjoy a unique view on the city through the Fellowship. “[The BCMF] gives me a really interesting vantage point. I just wanted a different perspective.”

For the summer, Michael is working with the Department of Housing on a four-year retrospective of housing initiatives within the City. So far, Michael has mostly been working on compiling the information, since there is an abundance of it from the past four years. The report will benefit

stakeholders eager to understand where their money is going. In addition, the report will reveal vital information on what housing initiatives have worked and what can be improved.

Regarding Anna Custer and her Live Baltimore presentation at the Speaker Series, Michael sees that there is “Definitely a relation. The Housing department is trying to make housing better for residents. Anna Custer is trying to get people to move in and stay. Custer is looking at home ownership while we are more focused on the public housing voucher, but I think they are really tied together.” Michael adds, “If you want people to stay in a city, it doesn’t matter if they are renting or buying. You have to give them reasons to stay.”

Outside of work, Michael takes pleasure in reading as well as the outdoors. He is an avid fan of the expansive music scene in Baltimore and Washington D.C. Michael enjoys the “double life” he is living: both a teacher in the city and a fellow within the government. He also takes pleasure in spending time with the other fellows. “I love connecting with everyone here while maintaining a specific focus.”

“I love Baltimore because it’s unlike any other city I’ve been to. But, being unique isn’t all positive, and I have noticed a movement especially in last couple years to fight those negatives.” Despite the diverse demographics and neighborhoods in Baltimore, Michael notes that “They all have Baltimore pride, and I love that.”

Upcoming Events

July 2 nd	July 6 th	July 8 th
Visit to CCTV and Police Ride-Along (Evening)	Speaker Series: Police Commissioner Bealefeld & US Attorney Rosenstein	Volunteering at Homeless Shelter (Evening)

The 2009 Baltimore City Mayoral Fellowship Program Newsletter

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